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Guilty plea for a gun that was stashed next to a pre-school

Jose Burgos, 19, of Providence, has pleaded guilty to being a felon in possession of a firearm, admitting that he had a gun hidden next to a Providence Head Start center in February.

United States Attorney Robert Clark Corrente announced the guilty plea, which Burgos entered yesterday before U.S. District Court Judge William E. Smith in U.S. District Court, Providence.

At the plea hearing, Assistant U.S. Attorney Peter F. Neronha said that, had the case gone to trial, the government would have proven that, on February 10, a teacher at the Friendship Corner Head Start Center looked out the window of his classroom and saw a man take a plastic bag from behind some pallets that were leaning against the wall of the building. The bag appeared to contain a gun. After a few moments, the man, later identified as Burgos, replaced the bag behind the pallets.

School employees retrieved the bag, saw the gun in it, and called Providence Police. Officers located Burgos at Pearl and Friendship Streets and he subsequently admitted having possessed the gun.

Burgos, who has a prior felony conviction for drug trafficking, is prohibited under federal law from possessing firearms. The maximum penalty for being a felon in possession of a firearm is ten years in federal prison and a \$250,000 fine.

Burgos, of 8 Whelan Road, Apt. 5, is detained at the state Adult Correctional Institutions, pending sentencing, which is scheduled for October 7.

Providence Police and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives investigated the case. The federal prosecution of Burgos is part of **Project Safe Neighborhoods**, a Department of Justice initiative against gun crimes. Under Project Safe Neighborhoods, the U.S. Attorney's Office, working with Providence Police, ATF, the Rhode Island Attorney General's Office, and other agencies, aggressively prosecutes federal firearms offenses in an effort to incarcerate those responsible for gun violence and deter others from committing gun crimes. Since 2001, federal firearms prosecutions in Rhode Island have more than doubled and gun offenders have been sentenced to a total of more than 600 years in federal prison.

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